

Off The Fringe Down and Out

By Larry Aylward and Curt Harler

They call Tim Powell “Tim Ber” at the Charlotte (N.C.) Country Club. The nickname fits.

Powell is the golf course’s arborist.

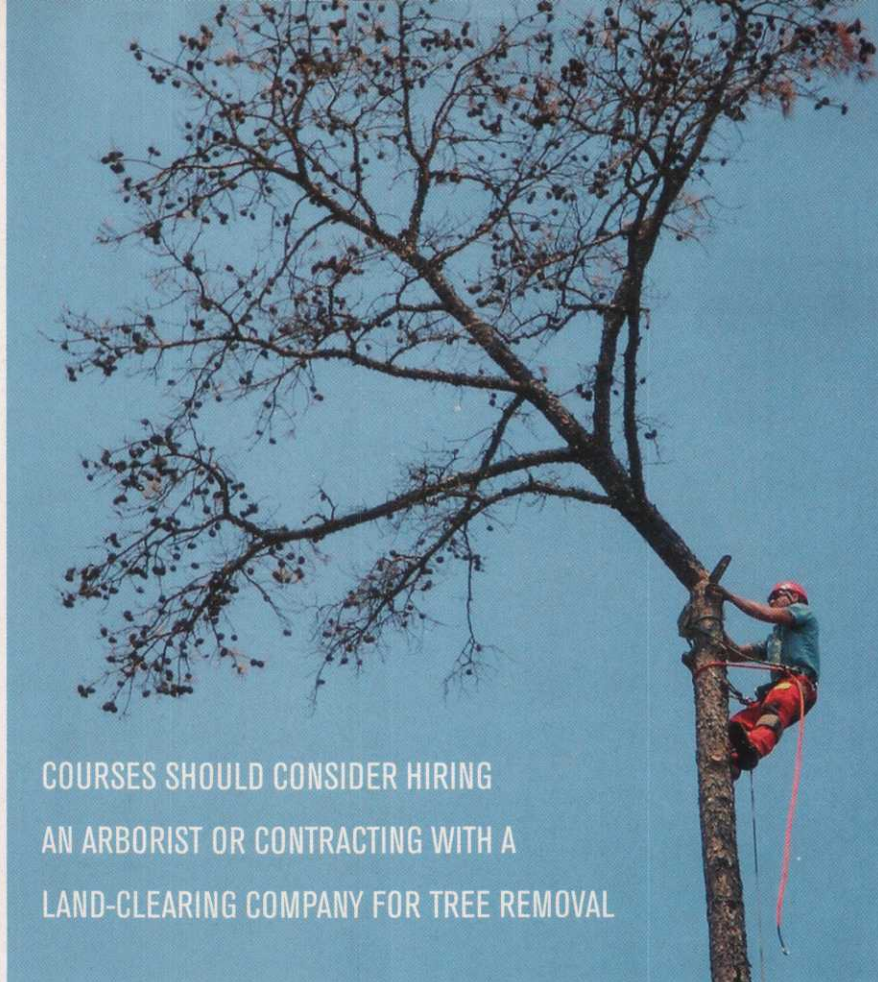
And Powell, who has a forestry degree from Clemson University, says hiring an arborist at any golf course makes sense. Powell is not trying to score one for his profession as much as he’s trying to save golf course maintenance operations a few bucks, especially if they’re contracting out their tree maintenance business for \$60,000 to \$80,000 a year.

“I believe it’s a big advantage,” says Powell, who has worked at Charlotte for about two years. “If you can afford a chipper and you have somebody who knows what he’s doing, there’s no telling how much money he can save you as far getting things done.”

Powell says he recently learned it can cost a course about \$1,500 to hire a tree company to take down a big tree and haul it away. Powell says he can do the job for less, provided there’s a place to store the tree’s cut-up wood and chips.

Powell also realizes the importance of performing such work when golfers aren’t around. He and his small crew will fell trees in the early morning while it’s still dark to keep clear of golfers’ play.

“We’ll cut down the tree using a headlight if it’s too dark,” he says. “It’s



COURSES SHOULD CONSIDER HIRING
AN ARBORIST OR CONTRACTING WITH A
LAND-CLEARING COMPANY FOR TREE REMOVAL

about giving better service to the members.”

An on-course arborist is also more familiar with a golf course property’s trees than a contractor would ever be, Powell contends.

“I can drive around and tell you what’s wrong with this tree and that tree,” Powell says, “because I see the trees every day.”

Charlotte Country Club also began a tree inventory to quantify the number of trees on the course and their condition. All of the trees are tagged with numbers. The computerized inventory contains

several pieces of information about each tree, including species, location, diameter and health. The tree inventory is an excellent organizational tool.

There are start-up costs for a course to hire an arborist, Powell notes. A course would need the proper equipment, such as a 12-inch wood chipper and a truck to catch the wood chips. A new wood chipper costs about \$30,000, Powell estimates. A used truck could be had for about \$5,000 to \$8,000. A course would also want to purchase a stump grinder for about \$25,000, he says. In addition, saws ranging from \$300 to \$1,000 are also needed.

Powell says the median pay for an arborist varies around the country. In Charlotte, an arborist makes at least \$18 an hour.

Powell believes more golf courses will begin hiring arborists. “It’s going to be a trend,” he adds, noting that golf courses will realize the money to be saved.

But golf courses must realize it will be a long-term savings, especially after

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Tim Powell, the arborist at the Charlotte Country Club, is experienced in taking down the biggest of trees. (Above photo) He’s also not afraid to scale the tallest trees.

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wetting agents in an area before making widespread applications. "There are a lot of wetting agents to choose from," Brame said. "And they're different."

Dave Gardner, a professor in Ohio State's Department of Horticulture and Crop Science, spoke on herbicide use for the season. But regarding perennial broadleaf weeds, Gardner said white clover, dandelion, wild violet and others are best controlled in the spring and summer when they are hit with a herbicide in the fall.

"Springtime control is a Band-Aid for these weeds," Gardner said. "If you really want to get rid of them, put down applications in September, October or even November."

Dave Shetlar, a professor in Ohio State's Department of Entomology, spoke about recent insect control studies and new programs for 2007. Shetlar talked in-depth about some of the new insecticides coming out to battle grubs and other bugs. But he also noted that Milorganite can help in this area.

Milorganite? Apparently, grub-infested turf treated with Milorganite — a natural fertilizer — deters skunks and raccoons from tearing up turf to get at grubs for their dinner.

Old Course Welcomes McKie

A 12-year veteran of St. Andrews Links Trust, Gordon McKie has been appointed head greenkeeper of the Old Course. "It is a privilege to work on the most famous course in the world," McKie said in a prepared statement. McKie replaces Euan Grant, who is moving into a similar role at a new development in the Mull of Kintyre after three years at the Old Course.

Bayer Defends Patent

Bayer CropScience says its will "vigorously defend" its intellectual property rights in the wake of a suit filed by Etigra LLC regarding Bayer's patented use of the pesticide imidacloprid on fertilizer. Bayer said Etigra filed suit claiming that its method of formulating imidacloprid on fertilizer does not violate the Bayer-owned patent. Bayer invented the mixture of imidacloprid on fertilizer, sold by Bayer Environmental Science as Merit. ■



Seller's Market, Indeed

The face value of a ticket to the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club for Wednesday's practice round was \$36. But that Wednesday ticket, which included the event's famed Par 3 Contest, could have been sold on the street for \$300 to \$400. Augusta's entrance gate on the same day was jammed with thousands of golf fans. Well, what do you expect at a place where people go to see the golf course as much the golfers?

(Photographs by Larry Aylward)



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their initial investments. "But in a couple of years or less, depending on how much work [an arborist] can get done, they will make that money back," Powell says.

Incidentally, there has been no shortage of work for Powell on the course. "For a while, I was taking one to two trees down a day," he says.

If hiring an arborist is not feasible, a golf course may consider using a land-clearing company to remove trees. Jim Skorulski, senior agronomist for the United States Golf Association Green Section's Northeast Region, told attendants of a seminar at the recent Golf Industry Show that land-clearing companies can help alleviate the cost that comes with cutting down trees.

"They work fast and they can be

much less expensive," Skorulski said.

He talked about one course that received a bid for \$100,000 for a particular job. A tree company said it would take three to four weeks to remove all the trees. A land-clearing company bid the same job at \$39,000 and needed about four days.

Skorulski also advised that courses check with loggers who might want to harvest the timber. They are interested in trees beyond fancy veneer and saw timber. There are markets for pulpwood and even firewood.

However, Skorulski cautioned that land-clearing operations and loggers are not accustomed to working around delicate turf. So be sure to define the limits of where they can run their equipment if you hire them, he added. ■